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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003742

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/RSP/TC  
STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2015  
TAGS: [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [SENV](#) [TBIO](#) [TW](#) [ESTH](#)  
SUBJECT: TAIWAN AFFIRMS PREPARING FOR AVIAN INFLUENZA A TOP  
PRIORITY

REF: A) 2005 STATE 15149 B) 2005 TAIPEI 03598

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David Keegan for Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

1. (U) Following up on delivery of ref A demarche, AIT Acting Director also delivered the demarche to Executive Yuan (EY) Secretary General Lee Ying-yuan and National Security Council

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(NSC) Secretary General Chiou I-jen on September 2. ADIR thanked Lee and Chiou for making Avian Influenza (AI) a top priority and encouraged Taiwan to continue its efforts to prepare for a potential AI pandemic. Lee and Chiou took this opportunity to express great sympathy for the plight caused by Hurricane Katrina.

BUREAUCRACY ENGAGED ON AI  
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2. (U) Both Lee and Chiou were well-briefed about avian influenza and the steps that Taiwan has taken to address the issue. Lee, with a background in public health (including a Phd in Public Health from Harvard), said "We are serious" about preparing for the worst. Armed with printouts of presentations prepared for President Chen Shui-bian, Lee displayed a thorough knowledge of Taiwan's preparations, flipping through the presentations to point out facts and figures. He provided AIT with copies of the presentations. Lee said that there have been many, many meetings involving relevant agencies, including the Department of Health, the Council of Agriculture, the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control and the Executive Yuan. Both Lee and Chiou noted President Chen Shui-bian's determination to put into practice all of the lessons learned during the SARS outbreak in 2003 in an effort to avert a crisis in Taiwan. Both of them said that Taiwan is convinced that confronting an Avian Influenza outbreak is a matter of "when" not "if." Septel reports in depth on the steps that Taiwan is taking to prepare for a potential AI outbreak.

MEDICAL RESPONSE  
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3. (C) Taiwan announced over a year ago that it is intent on developing a local vaccine research and production capability. The threat of a pandemic has encouraged Taiwan to step up its efforts in this area. Both Lee and Chiou said that Taiwan is making research and development of both a vaccine and anti-viral drugs a top priority with the hope that Taiwan would be prepared to protect its people in the event of an outbreak. Taiwan has already stocked doses of the anti-viral drug oseltamavir, but, according to Lee, hopes to be able to produce its own medications in the near term. Lee and Chiou told us that prominent scientists in the field have been designated to manage Taiwan's research efforts and supplied with significant funding. While Taiwan publicly estimates that it will take between five and seven years to develop an AI vaccine, Lee hinted that Taiwan has already figured out the formula for copying the anti-viral oseltamavir, identified potential production facilities, and would be prepared to institute emergency powers to override any intellectual property concerns and produce it in the event of an AI pandemic.

COMMENT  
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4. (C) While we have no way to assess Taiwan's ability to move quickly to large-scale production of an anti-viral medication, the insinuation that Taiwan has figured out the formula for oseltamivir and thought about instituting emergency powers to produce it in the event of an AI outbreak was unmistakable. That begs the question of how far along the process of production Taiwan has already gone.  
KEEGAN